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“When we spoke at Versailles”: Lou Tseng-Tsiang and the Chinese Delegation at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, A Frustrated Quest for Justice

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This article will focus on the experiences of Lou Tseng-Tsiang (Lu Zhengxiang, 陆征祥 one of modern China's leading diplomats) and the Chinese delegation he led during the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. It argues that Chinese participation at the Paris Peace Conference was motivated by a quest for justice. China especially sought redress from the Unequal Treaties with foreign powers such as Germany. The Chinese delegates used ideals espoused by US President Woodrow Wilson to support their claims and also displayed political and diplomatic savvy as they used tools such as the media to further their cause. Nevertheless, Lou Tseng-Tsiang and his compatriots in Paris and China were disappointed with the outcome of the Peace Conference and the Chinese delegation ultimately did not sign the Treaty of Versailles.

Introduction

China, in coming to the Peace Conference, has relied on the Fourteen Points set forth by President Wilson [...] and formerly [sic] adopted by the Powers associated against Germany. She has relied on the spirit of honorable relationship between states which is to open a new era in the world and inaugurate the League of Nations. She has relied, above all, on the justice and equity of her case. The result has been, to her, a grievous disappointment.¹

The quotation above is an excerpt from a letter of protest to the President of the 1919 Paris Peace Conference's Council of Three. The letter was written by a man, Dom Pierre-Célestin René Jean-Jacques Lou Tseng-Tsiang (陆征祥), who

¹ Nicholas M. Keegan, "From Chancery to Cloister: The Chinese Diplomat Who Became a Benedictine Monk," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 10, no. 1 (1999): 178.

in his lifetime (1871–1949) had been a diplomat, minister, monk and more.² At the 1919 Paris Peace Conference he was leader of the Chinese delegation that sought redress for injustices that had been inflicted on China.

This article will focus on the experiences of Lou Tseng-Tsiang and the Chinese delegation he led during the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 and its immediate aftermath.³ In doing so, it will illustrate some of the complexities of Chinese politics and diplomacy of the period within the context of the global geopolitical situation of the time. Chinese participation at the Paris Peace Conference was arguably motivated by a quest for justice. China especially sought redress from the Unequal Treaties with foreign powers such as the March 1898 treaty with Germany that had ceded concessions in Shandong province.⁴ The Chinese delegation used the ideals of self-determination and equality of nations espoused by President Woodrow Wilson of the USA to strengthen its case but was ultimately disappointed by the outcome of the Conference.

The historian Erez Manela highlights how President Wilson became for many people around the world the icon and most prominent exponent of the vision of a just international order based on the principle of self-determination and a League of Nations whose members would be equal in status.⁵ Inspired by Wilsonian rhetoric like the Fourteen Points Speech, nationalists in colonial and semi-colonial countries such as China launched campaigns to demand self-determination and international equality.⁶ Manela argues that nationalists in China and other colonial countries were savvy political actors who were aware of their weakness vis-à-vis the great imperial powers, and therefore sought to harness Wilson's power and rhetoric to advance the struggle to achieve international recognition and equality for their nations.⁷

An episode discussed in this article illustrates this political and diplomatic savvy: When the Chinese delegation hosted a reception for foreign journalists, they pleaded China's cause before the international media, and in doing so evoked ide-

2 In line with current academic convention, the Hanyu Pinyin system was used for the Romanization of Chinese words and names that appear in this thesis. Exceptions were made for figures such as Sun Yat-Sen and Chiang Kai Shek who are well known with names Romanized according to older Romanization systems. Since the thesis from which this article is derived has been an attempt to reanimate Lou Tseng-Tsiang's voice for a contemporary audience, a decision was made to Romanize Lou's name as "Lou Tseng-Tsiang," the Romanization he himself used, rather than adopt the Pinyin Romanization "Lu Zhengxiang".

3 This article has been adapted from several sections of the author's undergraduate thesis, Julian Theseira, "Gentle as Jade: Perspectives Upon the Multiple Lives of Lou Tseng-Tsiang" (B.A. thesis, Wesleyan University, 2014).

4 Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), 112. Klaus Mühlhahn, "Negotiating The Nation: German colonialism and Chinese nationalism in Qingdao, 1897-1914," in *Twentieth-century Colonialism and China: Localities, the everyday, and the world*, ed. Bryna Goodman and David S.G. Goodman (London: Routledge, 2012), 38.

5 Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*: 6, 10.

6 *Ibid.*, 10, 12.

7 *Ibid.*, 13.

als of justice and an equal international order espoused by American leaders - especially President Wilson. While the Chinese delegation was divided by internal rivalry mirroring the political factions in China at the time - as demonstrated by an incident analyzed in this article when several delegates competed for the main seat at a meeting table -, the Chinese diplomats were ultimately united in their pursuit of international justice for China.

*Neither Politician nor Scholar*⁸

Dom Pierre-Célestin Lou Tseng-Tsiang was born into the turbulent period of late Qing and Republican China. This was a time of foreign aggression against China, but also a time of changes and new beginnings in Chinese politics and society. The Republic of China was Asia’s first republic. Simultaneously, Christianity was gaining adherents and Confucianism was losing its traditional predominant place in Chinese society.⁹

Lou Tseng-Tsiang grew up in a Protestant family in Shanghai, but converted to Catholicism in adulthood. He did not enroll in a traditional Confucian academy but did have some home schooling in Chinese classics.¹⁰ Lou Tseng-Tsiang’s father Lou Yong-Fong enrolled him instead in the Shanghai School of Foreign Languages located in the Jiangnan Arsenal.¹¹ There, Lou Tseng-Tsiang specialized in the study of French.¹² Lou continued his education at the *Tong Wen Guan*, the school for interpreters established in 1862 and attached to the *Zongli Yamen* (Chinese Office of Foreign Affairs) in Beijing.¹³ Lou’s command of French was a valuable skill that helped him to eventually become one of the leading Chinese diplomats of his time.

8 The following overview of Lou Tseng-Tsiang’s life is based mainly on his autobiography: Dom Pierre-Célestin Lou Tseng-Tsiang, *Souvenirs et Pensées* (Flavigny-sur-Ozerain: Traditions Monastiques, 2009).

9 Daniel H. Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China* (Chichester: Wiley – Blackwell, 2012), 77-79, 94, 103, 107-109.

10 Shi Jianguo 石建国, *Lu Zhengxiang Zhuan* 陆征祥传 (*Biography of Lu Zhengxiang*), (Shijiazhuang: Hebei Renmin Chubanshe, 1999), 9.

11 Lou, *Souvenirs et Pensées*, 38. Meanwhile, for a discussion of the historical background of the Shanghai School of Foreign Languages, the subjects it taught, and its appeal to the Shanghainese, please refer to Benjamin A. Elman, *On Their Own Terms: Science in China, 1550-1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 369-370. Elman argued that because the school taught both the Confucian Classics and new subjects such as Western algebra, geometry, international law, etc., it came to be seen as an alternative means for accessing the Chinese civil service.

12 Lou, *Souvenirs et Pensées*, 39.

13 Lou, *Souvenirs et Pensées*, 39. Meanwhile, for a discussion of the historical background of the establishment of the *Tong Wen Guan* within the context of mid-19th century Chinese reforms, please refer to Mary C. Wright, *The Last Stand Of Chinese Conservatism: The T’ung-Chih Restoration, 1862 – 1874* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1962), 6-8, 242-243. Wright argued that the *Tong Wen Guan* was an attempt to integrate new learning into the old Chinese educational system, thereby hopefully strengthening the system against Western expansion and “Cantonese compradors.”

Through a combination of professional skills and patronage, Lou Tseng-Tsiang successfully climbed the ranks of the Chinese Foreign Service to eventually serve as an ambassador, foreign minister and even prime minister of China. He was involved in crucial Sino-Russian and Sino-Japanese negotiations and led the Chinese delegation at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference.¹⁴ Lou throughout his life considered himself to be both a Confucianist and a Christian; he was a Chinese patriot as well as a Europhile.¹⁵ During his time in public service he sought to modernize the Chinese foreign ministry according to Western models.¹⁶ However, unlike some more radical reformers of the Republican period who were very critical of Chinese traditions, Lou defended the humanistic value of Confucianism.¹⁷

After the death of his Belgian Catholic wife and the end of his political and diplomatic career, he joined a Benedictine monastery in Belgium in 1927.¹⁸ Even though Lou Tseng-Tsiang lived out the rest of his life as a Benedictine monk and priest, he nevertheless remained concerned with Chinese affairs and actively spoke out for China's cause after Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931 and then attacked China in 1937.¹⁹ During his time as a monk, Lou reflected on his past experiences and compiled them into an autobiography entitled *Souvenirs et Pensées*.²⁰ The autobiography was translated into multiple languages, Dutch, *Mijn roeping: herinneringen en gedachten* (De Kinkhoren: Desclée de Brouwer, 1946), German, *Konfuzianer und Christ* (Luzern: Josef Stocker, 1947), Spanish, *Recuerdos y Pensamientos* (Desclée de Brouwer: Bilbao, 1947), and English, *Ways of Confucius and of Christ* (London: Burns & Oates, 1948).²¹

As a monk, Lou Tseng-Tsiang came to believe that diplomacy and international organizations were not enough to ensure justice and peace. By the end of his life, he instead emphasized the need for mutual respect and understanding between peoples. In a manuscript published posthumously under the title *La rencontre des humanités et la découverte de l'évangile*, he argued for the necessity of inter-civilizational dialogue via engagement with the humanistic foundations of different civilizations.²² Lou longed to return to China as a Catholic missionary.²³ War and

14 Keegan, "From Chancery to Cloister," 176-177.

15 Ibid., 172 – 173, 175.

16 Lou, *Souvenirs et Pensées*, 60, 62-63.

17 Dom Pierre-Célestin Lou Tseng-Tsiang, *La Rencontre Des Humanités Et La Découverte De L'Évangile* (Bruges: Desclée De Brouwer, 1949), 14-15.

18 Lou, *Souvenirs et Pensées*, 92.

19 For instance in 1933, Lou Tseng-Tsiang published the following booklet criticizing the Japanese invasion and occupation of Manchuria from the perspective of Catholic doctrine: Dom Pierre-Célestin Lou Tseng-Tsiang Moine Bénédictin Ancien Ministre des Affaires Étrangères de la République Chinoise, *L'invasion et l'occupation de la Mandchourie jugées à la lumière de la Doctrine Catholique par les écrits du Cardinal Mercier* (Paris: Les Editions Du Foyer, 1933).

20 Lou, *Souvenirs et Pensées*, 31.

21 Ibid., 13.

22 Lou, *La Rencontre Des Humanités Et La Découverte De L'Évangile*, 12-13.

23 Dom Pierre-Célestin Lou Tseng-Tsiang, *La Bénédiction Abbaticale Du Révérendissime Père Dom Pierre-Célestin Lou Tseng-Tsiang Abbé Titulaire De Saint-Pierre De Gand: Allocution*

ill health however prevented that. He passed away on 15 January 1949, before the Communist takeover of China.²⁴

Beyond Chancery and Cloister

Despite his curious and yet influential life, Western scholarship on Lou Tseng-Tsiang is currently sparse. One published secondary source in English that examines Lou Tseng-Tsiang’s life in entirety is Nicholas Keegan’s article published in the journal *Diplomacy and Statecraft* in 1999 and entitled “From Chancery to Cloister: The Chinese Diplomat who became a Benedictine Monk.”

Keegan’s article argued that studies of the lives of Chinese diplomats such as Lou Tseng-Tsiang comparing how they viewed the significant events in the history of Sino-Western relations with Western accounts would enhance our understanding of important moments in modern international history.²⁵ This article expands on Keegan’s work by analyzing in greater depth how Lou and his colleagues experienced the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. Keegan highlighted Lou’s contribution to the Chinese cause at the Paris Peace Conference as he had insisted that China be represented on three of the Conference’s most important commissions: the League of Nations, International Control of Ports, Railways and Waterways, and International Labor Legislation. Chinese representatives were successfully appointed to the first two of these commissions.²⁶

Lou Tseng-Tsiang was also the subject of study of an unpublished doctoral dissertation by Claire Shu-chin Chang entitled “When Confucius Meets Benedictus: The Destiny of A Chinese Politician Lou Tseng-Tsiang (1871 – 1949).” Chang argued that Lou Tseng-Tsiang was one of the most remarkable personalities of his era, as he was an important government official during both the Qing dynasty and early Republican China, and some of his decisions affected China for a long period.²⁷ Chang came to the conclusion that Lou was universalistic in his concern for humanity. He had a world consciousness that was not limited by Chinese nationalism and this colored his religious sentiments as well.²⁸ Chang’s dissertation

De Dom Lou, August 10, 1946, 11, Printed Copy of Text of Address, From The Dom Pierre-Célestin Lou Tseng-Tsiang Papers, (1871 - 1949), KADOC Documentatie- en Onderzoekscentrum voor Religie, Cultuur en Samenleving, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KADOC Documentation and Research Centre for Religion, Culture and Society of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven), (accessed August 2, 2013).

24 Keegan, “From Chancery to Cloister,” 183.

25 *Ibid.*, 172.

26 *Ibid.*, 177.

27 Claire Shu-chin Chang, “When Confucius Meets Benedictus: The Destiny of A Chinese Politician Lou Tseng-Tsiang (1871-1949)” (PhD diss., Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 1994), 13.

28 *Ibid.*, 385.

is valuable for the insights it provides into Lou's inner turmoil during the Paris Peace Conference.²⁹

The most recent scholarly work in English that studied Lou Tseng-Tsiang is a chapter in a monograph by David Strand published in 2011 and entitled *An Unfinished Republic: Leading by Word and Deed in Modern China*. Strand analyzes how three prominent political actors of early Republican China, including the diplomat Lou Tseng-Tsiang, attempted to adapt to the Republican atmosphere and adopt new political practices that had developed in China - such as public speech-making.³⁰ Strand focuses on Lou's short tenure as Chinese prime minister in 1912 and provides only a very brief overview of Lou's experience of the Paris Peace Conference, noting that his refusal to sign the Treaty of Versailles was his "shining republican and patriotic moment" although he may have been simply swept along by events. Strand also points out that some historians argue that other Chinese diplomats, such as V.K. Wellington Koo (Gu Weijun), played a stronger role in Paris than Lou did.³¹

Chinese scholarship on Lou Tseng-Tsiang is more extensive, including three full-length biographies. Stanislaus Luo Guang's (Lokuang) *Lu Zhengxiang Zhuan (Biography of Lu Zhengxiang)* is the oldest biography of Lou, first published by the Truth Society of Hong Kong in 1949, the very year of Lou Tseng-Tsiang's death, and subsequently republished in 1967.

Luo Guang derived much of his personal understanding of Lou Tseng-Tsiang from interviews he conducted with his then elderly compatriot after he had become a monk. When discussing the Paris Peace Conference and its immediate aftermath with Luo, Lou mentioned the large crowds who welcomed him back to China with acclaim at the port of Shanghai and at the train station because he had refused to sign the Treaty of Versailles.³²

The second published biography of Lou Tseng-Tsiang written in Chinese is by Shi Jianguo. It is also entitled *Lu Zhengxiang Zhuan (Biography of Lu Zhengxiang)* and was published in 1999 by the Hebei Renmin Chubanshe (Hebei People's Press). Shi Jianguo's biography of Lou Tseng-Tsiang is primarily focused on Lou's diplomatic career.

Shi thought that Lou was unique because not only was he an accomplished statesman, but in his later years he also became a distinguished monk, being elevated by the Catholic Church to become the first Chinese Benedictine abbot in history.³³ This article draws on Shi's work to illuminate some of the domestic op-

29 Ibid., 233.

30 David Strand, *An Unfinished Republic: Leading by Word and Deed in Modern China* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 2.

31 Ibid., 186-187, 191, 213, 217-222.

32 Luo Guang 羅光, *Lu Zhengxiang Zhuan 陸徵祥傳 (Biography of Lu Zhengxiang)* 2nd ed. (Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1967), 115-116.

33 Shi, *Lu Zhengxiang Zhuan*, 283-285.

position to Lou’s appointment as head of the Chinese delegation to the Paris Peace Conference.³⁴

The third and most recent Chinese biography of Lou Tseng-Tsiang, *Ruoguo Waizhang Lu Zhengxiang; Xiangei Xinhai Geming Yibai Zhounian (Lu Zhengxiang Foreign Minister of a Weak Country: Dedicated to the Centenary of the Xinhai Revolution)* by Hu Xinding, Lü Cai and Hu Ying, was published in 2011 by the Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe (World Knowledge Press). The authors argue that the 1919 Paris Peace Conference was a turning point in modern Chinese history because the Chinese delegation rejected the Treaty of Versailles, whereas in the preceding decades the Chinese had agreed to a series of unequal treaties and agreements with foreign powers that conceded Chinese territory to outsiders and committed China to paying costly indemnities. They also highlight Lou’s role in leading the Chinese delegation to reject the Treaty of Versailles.³⁵

This article aims to contribute to the scholarship on the career and life of Lou Tseng-Tsiang by focusing on his participation in the 1919 Paris Peace Conference as the leader of the Chinese delegation. The choice was made to concentrate on the Paris Peace Conference because it was a crucial experience for Lou - as indicated by his decision to mention it in an address made years later:

Vous me reprocheriez, Messieurs, un vrai manque de coeur, si, en terminant, je ne redisais, aujourd’hui toute ma profonde affection à mes propres compatriotes, à mes collègues et anciens collaborateurs du Corps Diplomatique Chinois, qui au moment où je deviens Abbé, se retrouvent à défendre la cause de la Paix à la Conférence de Paris, comme nous le fîmes ensemble, il y a 27 ans, au Congrès de Versailles.³⁶

On the solemn occasion of his consecration as an abbot, Lou said it was imperative for him to remember his former colleagues in the Chinese diplomatic corps affectionately. In 1946, some of them had gathered in Paris to take part in deliberations concerning the nature of the post-war international order, just as they had done twenty-seven years earlier in Versailles. The 1919 Paris Peace Conference was the only one of the multiple international conferences Lou attended that he mentioned explicitly in this address, thereby demonstrating its importance to him personally.

³⁴ Ibid., 203 – 204.

³⁵ Hu Xinding 胡心鼎, Lü Cai 吕才 and Hu Ying 胡颖, *Ruoguo Waizhang Lu Zhengxiang: Xiangei Xinhai Geming Yibai Zhounian* 弱国外长陆征祥：献给辛亥革命一百周年 (*Lu Zhengxiang Foreign Minister of a Weak Country: Dedicated to the Centenary of the Xinhai Revolution*) (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 2011), 153-154.

³⁶ Lou, *La Bénédiction Abbatiale Du Révérendissime Père Dom Pierre-Célestin Lou Tseng-Tsiang Abbé Titulaire De Saint-Pierre De Gand*, 10.

Jostling At The Table

China sent a large delegation of more than sixty members with five plenipotentiary delegates to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.³⁷ The Chinese delegates led by Lou Tseng-Tsiang had initially travelled to Paris with a set of far-reaching goals they wanted to achieve for China at the Peace Conference. They sought the abrogation of all the unequal treaties that had been concluded with the foreign powers and which infringed on Chinese sovereignty. They also wanted to phase out the system of extraterritorial jurisdiction for foreigners in China, and asked that leased territories and foreign concessions in Chinese railroads, mines, and communications be returned to Chinese hands.³⁸ Instructions from the Chinese government meanwhile unequivocally stated that China's primary objective at the Paris Peace Conference was the recovery of the German concessions in Shandong.³⁹ Shandong was of symbolic importance to the Chinese as it was the birth province of the Chinese sage, Confucius. The region was also strategically important for defending the southern flank of Beijing, and for securing control of the lower reaches of the Yellow River and the Grand Canal.⁴⁰

China's basis for its presence at the Peace Conference was that China had supported the Allied cause during the war by sending more than 100 000 laborers to Europe. The Chinese reformist thinker Kang Youwei had written a letter to Lou in 1919, asking Lou to fight for equal treatment of Chinese laborers in Europe and elsewhere, because it was they who had truly contributed to the war on behalf of China.⁴¹ Many of the laborers originated from Shandong province and during the Peace Conference they were keenly interested in Chinese diplomatic efforts to recover control of their native region. An article published in the *Chinese Labor Journal* encouraged all Chinese workers in France to express their opposition to transferring the German concessions in Shandong to Japan. Chinese laborers also sent a petition directly to Lou Tseng-Tsiang in Paris urging him not to accept the Treaty of Versailles. The petition included a pistol and a threat that "if [Lou] agrees to Japan's demands, [he] should commit suicide with this pistol. Otherwise we will kill him."⁴²

Lou Tseng-Tsiang was appointed to lead the Chinese delegation to the Paris Peace Conference in his capacity as foreign minister of China.⁴³ Despite Lou's credentials and experience, his appointment as chief of the Chinese delegation to

37 Xu Guoqi, *China and the Great War: China's pursuit of a new national identity and internationalization* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 246.

38 Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 112.

39 Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed The World* (New York, NY: Random House, 2001), 332.

40 *Ibid.*, 326.

41 Xu Guoqi, *Strangers On The Western Front: Chinese Workers in the Great War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 213.

42 *Ibid.*, 216, 237.

43 Lou, *Souvenirs et Pensées*, 67.

Versailles was not without opposition; the Anhui clique and other factions close to Japan opposed Lou’s appointment. These factions lobbied for Liang Qichao to be selected to lead the Chinese delegation as Liang was close to Japan.⁴⁴ A newspaper of the period, the *Minguo Ribao* (Republican Daily) also documented some Chinese dissatisfaction with Lou, “Lou’s diplomacy as Foreign Minister, whether on the issues of Mongolia, Manchuria, Tibet, etc. have all resulted in national humiliation. Moreover, he lost a confidence vote in the National Assembly. This shows that the people do not recognize Lou’s diplomacy.”⁴⁵

Meanwhile, opposition to Lou Tseng-Tsiang’s status as chief delegate also came from the Southern government of the time. This opposition was due to Lou’s past involvement with Yuan Shikai’s government and Yuan’s failed attempt at imperial restoration. Lou’s competence as a diplomat was also questioned. He was accused of having failed to adequately defend Chinese sovereignty over Mongolia, Manchuria and Tibet from foreign incursions during his stewardship of the Foreign Ministry. The National Assembly’s vote against Lou in 1912 was also seen as a sign that the Chinese people lacked confidence in Lou’s abilities.⁴⁶

The internal disputes amongst the Chinese continued at Versailles as evidenced for example by an episode recounted by Wellington Koo in his memoirs:

In the beginning of February, the Chinese delegation convened a meeting. [...] Normally, the seat was left at the head of the table for the chair of the meeting, Minister Lou. However on this occasion, there were two chairs at the head of the table. Delegation Secretary Shi said he had been told by C.T. Wang’s private secretary, Zhao, that since Wang represented the Southern government, his status was equal to that of Lou’s. Hence the seats should be arranged to reflect their joint chairing of the meeting and delegation.⁴⁷

The early leadership disputes within the Chinese delegation mirrored the ongoing power struggles in China and initially hampered the work of the Chinese

44 Shi, *Lu Zhengxiang Zhuan*, 203.

45 Translation of “Lushi zi zhang waijiao yilai, ruo mengmanzang gechu zhi waijiao, ju wubu sangquanruguo, qie cengjing guohui tou yi butongyipiao, zujian guomin duiyu lushi buneng shengren waijiao yi wei duoshu ren suo chengren 陆氏自长外交以来，若蒙满藏各处之外交，举无不丧权辱国，且曾经国会投以不同意票，足见国民对于陆氏不能胜任外交已为多数人所承认” from Shi, *Lu Zhengxiang Zhuan*, 203-204.

46 Shi, *Lu Zhengxiang Zhuan*, 204.

47 Translation of passage “2yuechu, daibiaotuan zhaokai yici huiyi. [...] tongchang zaichang-zhuoshangshou gei huiyi zhuxi Luzongzhang liu you yige zhuowei. Ke zheci wo kan nar fangzhe liangba yizi, [...] shishuo, zhao gaosu ta, Wang Zhengting boshi daibiao nanfang, rutong Lu zongzhang daibiao beifang yiyang, jiran diwei xiangdang, jiu ying xiang lianhe zhuxi nayang bing pai jiu zuo 2月初，代表团召开一次会议。[...] 通常在长桌上首给会议主席陆总长留有一个桌位。可这次我看那儿放着两把椅子，[...] 施说，赵告诉他，王正廷博士代表南方，如同陆总长代表北方一样，既然地位相当，就应像联合主席那样并排就坐。” From Gu Weijun 顾维钧, *Gu Weijun Huiyi Lu* 顾维钧回忆录 (*Memoirs of Gu Weijun*), vol. 1, trans. Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Jindaishi Yanjiusuo (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1982), 190.

delegation that had such lofty goals for the Conference. According to Koo's account, the aforementioned meeting became farcical when the delegates entered the room. C.T. Wang apparently jostled with Lou for the leading seat and usurped Lou's authority by acting as meeting chair. Lou remained silent in the face of this indignity. In doing so, Lou perhaps displayed traces of the future monk with inner fortitude. Koo meanwhile pointed out to his colleagues that Lou was still the foreign minister and head delegate and should be treated accordingly.⁴⁸

The Chinese plenipotentiaries seemed to be split into two camps. Wellington Koo, who had worked with Lou to reform the Chinese Foreign Ministry and like Lou Tseng-Tsiang was originally from the Shanghai region, supported Lou's leadership. C.T. Wang and Alfred Sze, on the other hand, formed an opposing camp.⁴⁹ Yet, the Chinese delegates eventually put aside their differences in the face of common challenges. Ultimately, they were united in not signing the Treaty of Versailles because it failed to resolve the question of control over German concessions in Shandong in China's favor.

An Oriental Courtesy

One of the reasons the Paris Peace Conference did not resolve the Shandong question to Chinese satisfaction was arguably because the Great Powers did not place much importance on Chinese demands. Lou Tseng-Tsiang reported the indifference of the leaders of the Great Powers towards developments in the Far East, and their lack of any desire to understand China's plight, or China's attempt to seek justice:

[...] *M. Lloyd George lui (Wellington Koo) posait la question: "The Twenty-One Demands, what's that?" Cette ignorance ouvertement affichée ne s'accompagnait d'aucun désir d'information : la cause de la Chine était jugée avant d'être entendue.*⁵⁰

When Wellington Koo discussed the Twenty-One Demands, he was stunned by Lloyd George's ignorance of the matter.⁵¹ Given the circumstances, Lou conclud-

48 Gu, *Gu Weijun Huiyi Lu*, vol. 1, 190-191.

49 Stephen G. Craft, *V.K. Wellington Koo and the Emergence of Modern China* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 49.

50 Lou, *Souvenirs et Pensées*, 68.

51 Japan presented The Twenty-One Demands to China in January 1915 with the aim of expanding and securing Japanese privileges in China. China finally accepted a revised set of demands backed by a Japanese ultimatum issued in May 1915 and concluded formal diplomatic treaties and agreements with Japan on the matter. For an extensive discussion of The Twenty-One Demands including their implications for Japanese politics, please refer to Frederick R. Dickinson, *War And National Reinvention: Japan in the Great War, 1914-1919* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999), 85-116.

ed therefore that China’s cause had been decided even before China had pleaded its case. The Great Powers were not interested in seeking justice for China.

Great Britain had fought the First World War to curtail Germany’s rise and maintain a world order in which Britain was the predominant imperial power. The British goal at Versailles in 1919 was to see the perpetuation of that world order, not to achieve international justice. Likewise, the French had no interest in seeking international justice except to demand compensation and retribution for the severe losses France had endured during the war.⁵²

Confronting the lack of comprehension from the Great Powers, and the complexities and contradictions of Sino-Japanese relations of the period, the Chinese delegation tried various methods to plead their case, including appeals to international media. A March 6, 1919 news report from the *Washington Post* with the headline “China Defies Japan: Peace Delegates Denounce Nipponese Aims as Imperialistic” recounted one press briefing where the Chinese tried to do just that. The article noted Chinese hopes placed in Wilsonian ideals, such as the right of nations to self-determination, in the run-up to the Peace Conference. The Chinese wanted the Peace Conference to free China from foreign interference and guarantee China’s national sovereignty:

Basing their attitude on the Wilsonian idea of the League of Nations the Chinese delegates make no secret of their hope that out of the peace conference will come a new China, free of all alien interference. Nor do they hesitate to affirm that unless the Far Eastern question is solved [...] the hope of preventing and or minimizing the chances of future wars by the League of Nations is illusory.⁵³

The Chinese were right in pointing out the importance of resolving the tensions in the Far East in order to prevent future conflicts. When Japan eventually invaded and occupied Manchuria in 1931, the League of Nations was powerless to check Japanese aggression, and Japan responded to international criticism by simply withdrawing from the League of Nations in 1933.⁵⁴

The foreign journalists also at first misunderstood the gravity of the situation in the eyes of the Chinese, as shown by their initial thoughts about the Chinese invitation:

52 John Maynard Keynes, “The Economic Consequences of the Peace,” in *Twentieth-Century Europe*, ed. John W. Boyer and Jan Goldstein, vol. 9 of *University of Chicago Readings in Western Civilization*, ed. John Boyer and Julius Kirshner (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 179.

53 John J. O’Brien, “China Defies Japan: Peace Delegates Denounce Nipponese Aims as Imperialistic,” *The Washington Post*, March 6, 1919, 1.

54 Thomas W. Burkman, *Japan and the League of Nations: Empire and World Order, 1914-1938* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), Burkman, 172, 175.

Ever since the publication of reports denials, counter-reports, new denials and counter-assertions regarding the alleged secret treaty between Japan and China there has been a feeling here that an explosion was bound to come. It came last night. It was heralded by the apparently guileless invitation, "Mr. Lou Tseng Tsiang requests the pleasure of your company at tea Tuesday." Being Mardi Gras we regarded the party as merely an oriental courtesy to foreign newspaper men. It was more than that. Gathered at the hotel Lutenia we found the entire Chinese delegation to the peace conference.⁵⁵

For the assembled Chinese, the occasion was a serious one, as they were attempting to argue for the preservation of Chinese national sovereignty and territorial integrity. They demonstrated their mastery of the ways of international diplomacy with a large delegation comprised of professional diplomats and technocrats, as well as skillful use of the modern mass circulation newspapers to advance their cause.

The Western journalists meanwhile revealed their ignorance of how much the Chinese had learned in such a short span of time. They may have thought the Chinese diplomats of 1919 were like those of the Qing Dynasty who were still unfamiliar with the ways of Westernized international diplomacy, and did not know how to argue for their country's rights and privileges. Consequently, they were merely expecting an "oriental courtesy" for Mardi Gras, which was hardly a traditional Chinese festival.

Significantly, despite the internal tensions and rivalries within the Chinese delegation, when facing the foreign press, the Chinese strove to present a united front:

Besides Mr. Lou welcoming us there were Wellington Koo, Ambassador to Washington, who has a seat on the league of nations commission; Tchedu Wei, secretary of the Chinese delegation to the conference; Chanting Thomas Wang, China's representative on the ports and waterways commission; a dozen minor members of the delegation, and several technical experts, including Quo Tai Chi, who told me proudly he was a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and was hoping to learn newspaper work in America when the war called him back to China. He is the expert adviser of the delegation on international politics.⁵⁶

The composition of the assembled Chinese illustrated the changing face of the Chinese diplomatic corps. Several of the prominent diplomats, such as Koo and Wang, and the technical experts, such as Guo Taiqi (Quo Tai Chi), spoke fluent English and were American rather than French educated. Quo even felt the need to

⁵⁵ O'Brien, "China Defies Japan," 1.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

emphasize his status as a graduate of a prestigious American university to the assembled journalists. Perhaps he hoped that the reputation of his alma mater might convince them of his quality as a technical adviser and an aspiring journalist.

The Washington Post article also noted that Lou Tseng-Tsiang allowed C.T. Thomas Wang (who had previously challenged Lou’s authority) to be the leading spokesperson at this press conference. This was evidently part of the effort to present a united Chinese front. Lou also likely recognized that, as a Yale graduate, Wang was much more comfortable conducting public diplomacy in English than Lou himself was:

Wang several times emphasized the fact that he was speaking to Americans. Wellington Koo, Tchedu Wei and Lou Tsenw (sic) Tsiang nodded appreciatively. Ambassador Koo remarked to me, “Our main hope is the American love of justice.”⁵⁷

Given the number of prominent American-trained diplomats and technical experts in the Chinese delegation (among the five Chinese plenipotentiaries, three were American educated: Wellington Koo at Columbia University, Alfred Sze at Cornell University, and C.T. Wang at Yale University), it is hardly surprising that the Chinese placed their hopes in the United States of America, which portrayed itself as the champion of liberty and justice.⁵⁸ The Allies on the whole had presented the war as a fight for civilization and justice. The USA and its president Woodrow Wilson were seen as the best embodiments of the love of justice and the hope for a new world order.

Lou Tseng-Tsiang noted that the American delegation was sympathetic to Chinese hopes:

[...] *la délégation des États-Unis au Congrès de la Paix multiplia envers nous les marques de compréhension et les actes de serviabilité. Les États-Unis allaient dans la suite poursuivre à notre égard une politique d’amitié qui nous fut très précieuse.*⁵⁹

Some of the Americans were reportedly understanding and helpful toward their Chinese counterparts. Lou remarked that American policy toward China after the Peace Conference was also friendly. However, this attitude was due more to American fears of Japanese domination in China and East Asia, which would have threatened American influence in the region, rather than due to any altruism on the part of the USA.

The Chinese delegates reminded the powers assembled in Paris that, given China’s military weakness at the time, it was dependent on foreign guarantees to secure its independence and sovereignty. All the Great Powers had competing

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 113.

⁵⁹ Lou, *Souvenirs et Pensées*, 68.

interests in China and no single power wanted another power to dominate China completely:

[...] said Mr. Wang in his speech, “the Chinese question may be said to center on the maintenance of the independence and integrity of China, which is guaranteed in a series of conventions and agreements concluded severally by Great Britain, France, Russia and the United States with Japan. The necessity for these international guarantees springs from the inability of China to prevent assault on her sovereignty, owing largely to the weakness marking the transition of a state in the throes of readjusting its life to the demands of the new environment.”⁶⁰

By playing the competing interests of the different powers against each other to advance China’s own agenda, the Chinese diplomats demonstrated a shrewd grasp of foreign policy and diplomacy. They understood how a militarily weak state could still use diplomacy to further its goals.

The Chinese were also keenly aware that American concern over developments in East Asia was also ultimately motivated by a desire to preserve American interests in China:

Mr. Wang then reviewed the presentation to China of Japan’s 21 demands in January, 1915, [...] He told how Japan had been dissuaded from proceeding further by the action of the American State Department informing Japan that America would not recognize any agreement impairing the policy of the open door.⁶¹

There may very well have been American statesmen who were sympathetic to China’s cause, but when America intervened to check Japanese expansion in China, it was because uncontrolled Japanese ascendancy would present a threat to America’s own pretensions as the dominant power in the Pacific basin.

China had perceived the Paris Peace Conference as a first opportunity to renegotiate the system of unequal treaties and foreign concessions that had been imposed on them over the course of the nineteenth century. They wanted to begin by reclaiming the German concessions in China, which Japan had since occupied:

Within the category of burdens against which we protest is included the system of imperialistic rights, interests, and privileges which Germany established in the province of Shantung in 1898. This German system was typically expressed in the leased territory of Kiao Chou. Japan, since her reduction of Kiao Chou, developed and delimited this territory for exclusive Japanese occupation.⁶²

60 O’Brien, “China Defies Japan,” 1.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

The Chinese did not achieve their main objectives at the Peace Conference. Nevertheless when the Chinese delegates returned to China, they were still mostly acclaimed as heroes for having rejected the Treaty of Versailles that transferred control of the German concessions in Shandong to Japan.⁶³

Wang concluded his speech by reminding the audience of China’s fervent support of the Allied cause during the war and Chinese praise for the idea of the League of Nations:

After recounting what China had actually done to help the cause of the allies in Europe, Mesopotamia and the Far East, Mr. Wang said China hailed the idea of a League of Nations as the “supreme expression of the intellectual and moral qualities of the modern mind.”⁶⁴

The League of Nations, whose members would be equally sovereign nation-states coming together to further the cause of international justice and peace, was a modern utopian internationalist idea.⁶⁵ It had, however strong echoes of the traditional Confucian notion of *Datong* or “Great or Grand Harmony,” a concept further developed by modern Chinese thinkers such as Kang Youwei.⁶⁶ Kang thought that the League of Nations would be an opportunity to realize the ideal of *Datong*.⁶⁷

These parallels between the League of Nations and *Datong* were not lost on the members of the Chinese delegation at Versailles, who, while being mostly Western educated, were at the same time grounded in the Chinese tradition. For instance, in a pamphlet entitled *China and the League of Nations* that Wellington Koo and C.T. Wang co-authored while in Paris, Koo drew a parallel between Wilson and Confucius, noting that both these men had “spared no effort in emphasizing the need of creating and preserving a new order of things which would ensure universal peace.”⁶⁸

Duty Not To Obey

In spite of all Chinese diplomatic efforts, the Great Powers decided to support Japan’s claims on the German concessions in Shandong. The transfer of the Ger-

63 Lou, *Souvenirs et Pensées*, 39, Luo, *Lu Zhengxiang Zhuan*, 115-116.

64 O’Brien, “China Defies Japan,” 1.

65 Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 108-109.

66 In the *Datongshu* 大同書 (*Book of Great Harmony*), Kang Youwei had advocated the abolishment of the state in politics, private property in economics, and families in the social structure because according to Kang, all evils in society came from the differences among countries, classes, races/ethnicities, genders, families, and wealth levels. From Hua Shiping, *Chinese Utopianism: A Comparative Study of Reformist Thought with Japan and Russia, 1898 – 1997* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2009), 36.

67 Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 108-109.

68 *Ibid.*, 115.

man concessions in Shandong to Japan would be formally accomplished through clauses in the Treaty of Versailles.⁶⁹ After much deliberation, Lou Tseng-Tsiang and the Chinese delegation decided not to sign the Treaty of Versailles.⁷⁰ In any case, events may have overtaken them, as on the day of the signing ceremony a group of Chinese students surrounded the Parisian hotel in which the Chinese delegation had lodged to prevent the delegates from leaving.⁷¹

The Chinese delegation had not yet received official approval for their decision from the Chinese government when they rejected the treaty:

*Pour la première fois dans ma carrière, je crus de mon devoir de ne pas obéir. [...] Je ne voulais pas, une nouvelle fois, apposer mon nom sous des clauses injustes, et je pris sur moi seul de refuser la signature.*⁷²

The Chinese perceived the treaty's clauses that transferred the German concessions in Shandong to Japan as deeply unjust. When Lou recounted his decision not to sign the treaty, he claimed it was the first time in his career that he believed he had a duty to disobey orders. He believed that it was time for China to stand up for its rights and not submit to being the plaything of the Great Powers any longer.⁷³ Lou Tseng-Tsiang asserted that he no longer wanted to attach his name to another unjust treaty. He did not want to repeat the experience of 1915 when he had signed the Twenty-One Demands. Lou later claimed he made the decision of his own accord.⁷⁴

The Shandong question and the deliberations concerning the Treaty of Versailles had aroused considerable interest among not just Chinese in China, but also among overseas Chinese.⁷⁵ China was the only country present at the Peace Conference that refused to sign the Treaty of Versailles.⁷⁶ The Chinese delegates had done the best they could to make a case for the return of Shandong in all its integrity directly to China. Secret treaties between the European powers and Japan, however, complicated the Shandong issue.⁷⁷ In exchange for Japan joining the war

69 MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, 338.

70 Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 193.

71 MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, 341.

72 Lou, *Souvenirs et Pensées*, 69-70.

73 *Ibid.*, 69.

74 *Ibid.*, 70.

75 To view messages from overseas Chinese communities received by the Chinese delegation in Paris, please refer to *Telegrams Received By The Chinese Delegation In Support Of Their Stand On The Shantung Question* (Paris: Imprimerie De Vaugirard, 1919).

76 MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, 341, 476.

77 Bruce A. Elleman, *Wilson and China: A Revised History Of The Shandong Question* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), 22. For an edited collection of diplomatic documents related to the Shandong Question, including those concerning the agreements between Great Britain, France and Japan with regards to Shandong, please refer to James Brown Scott, ed., *Shantung: Treaties and Agreements* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment For International Peace, 1921).

on the Allied side, France, England and Italy had committed not to support Chinese attempts to seek redress for China’s grievances, particularly against Japan.

The Chinese struggle was further jeopardized by secret agreements the Beijing government had concluded with Japan in September 1918, agreements that even the Chinese plenipotentiary delegates at Versailles were apparently unaware of until January 1919, when they were already in Paris.⁷⁸ The Chinese government had agreed to Japanese proposals concerning Shandong, such as the stationing of Japanese troops along the Shandong railway line, in return for the advance of a 20 million yen loan for extensions of the Shandong railway.⁷⁹ It was not just the European powers who had betrayed the Chinese delegation’s hopes through secret dealings with the Japanese, but also China’s very own government in Beijing.

While the Americans were initially sympathetic to the Chinese cause, the revelations of the September 1918 secret agreements between China and Japan forced the American delegation to reevaluate its support of the Chinese, especially since China had entered into these agreements willingly. Wilson himself faced a dilemma. Italy had walked out of the Conference as Fiume had been awarded to the Croats, thus disappointing the ambitions of Italian irredentism.⁸⁰ The Japanese, meanwhile, had already seen their proposal for a racial equality clause in the covenant of the League of Nations defeated. With Italy gone, Wilson could not risk having the Japanese withdraw their support of the League of Nations as well. In the end, a bargain of sorts was struck as Japanese claims in Shandong were recognized and Japan agreed not to vote against the League of Nations, despite their proposal for racial equality having been rejected.⁸¹

Disillusionment with such diplomatic bargaining may have contributed to Lou Tseng-Tsiang’s subsequent retreat from professional diplomacy. During the Peace Conference itself, the myriad and complex double-dealings and secret treaties, and the pressure from Chinese communities worldwide not to sign the peace treaty, were a source of great stress for Lou.

The strain seems to have taken a physical toll on Lou Tseng-Tsiang:

*Ce qui s’est passé le 27 dans la nuit et le 28 dans la matinée, dans le salon et le jardin de l’Établissement et enfin dans ma chambre de malade, même à mon chevet, a été comique et tragique au plus haut point de la vie humaine. Jamais je n’ai eu tant de gardes d’honneur; comme s’il s’agissait d’un enterrement d’un haut personnage [...].*⁸²

78 Elleman, *Wilson and China*, 41-43.

79 Scott, *Shantung*, 91-94.

80 MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, 336.

81 *Ibid.*, 336-338.

82 Lou Tseng-Tsiang, *Lou Tseng-Tsiang to Berthe Bovy, June 29, 1919*, Letter, Quoted in Claire Shu-chin Chang, “When Confucius Meets Benedictus: The Destiny of a Chinese Politician Lou Tseng-tsiang (1871-1949)” (PhD diss., Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 1994), 232.

Lou likened the atmosphere at his sick bed to that of a funeral. He compared those gathered by his bedside awaiting his decision concerning the treaty to a guard of honor attending the burial of a dignitary.⁸³

He further lamented about the gravity of the situation:

*Cette date et cette heure seront-elles heureuses ou malheureuses pour la Chine? L'avenir le dira [...], [...] Voilà tant de mois d'espoir et tant de mois de labeur se réduisent à une sublime absence de la Chine au concert des Nations civilisées [...].*⁸⁴

Lou was deeply disgruntled that long months of hope and labor had finally culminated in China's absence from the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. Moreover, he was not certain what kind of consequences China's absence from this momentous event might entail.

In addition, Lou was bitter about the delegation, comprised of foreign educated diplomats, having seemingly succumbed to popular pressure:

*Enfin, le mal est fait: ce qui est désolant et décourageant, il est fait par des hommes connaissant l'Europe et les affaires internationales, car les membres de la délégation malgré tout parlent tous une langue étrangère, sont tous élevés en Europe ou en Amérique et sont certainement supérieurs à ces vieux chinois de Pékin conservateurs et ignorant complètement l'étranger et les affaires étrangères.*⁸⁵

He felt that, given their qualifications, they should be superior to the Chinese crowds in Beijing, who supposedly lacked understanding of foreigners and foreign affairs and yet had clamored for the Chinese delegation not to sign the Treaty of Versailles. Lou would eventually revise his opinion, especially once it became clear that not signing the treaty did not leave China worse off, and in fact even raised his standing in the eyes of his compatriots.

The trials of the Paris Peace Conference brought to the fore frustrations that had been building up in Lou for some time. He confessed to his wife his weariness of diplomacy and his desire to retire from diplomatic service:

*Je suis plus que jamais décidé à quitter ma carrière qui m'a fait jusqu'à présent ma réputation et coûtera plus tard trop cher pour que j'y reste.⁸⁶ [...] D'ailleurs, ma santé le réclame et me l'impose. Même avec une santé robuste, pourquoi servir et se sacrifier pour un gouvernement impuissant à vous défendre au cas de danger.*⁸⁷

⁸³ Chang, "When Confucius Meets Benedictus," 232.

⁸⁴ Lou, *Lou Tseng-Tsiang to Berthe Bovy, June 29, 1919*, Quoted in Chang, "When Confucius Meets Benedictus," 233.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 234.

Lou noted that even though he had earned his reputation through a diplomatic career, the time had come for him to go. Staying would likely cost him dearly in the future. As it was, his health was already suffering from the stress of his work. But Lou claimed that even if he had been in good health, he no longer wanted to serve a government that was incapable of defending him in times of danger and trouble. Such language reveals the depth of Lou’s disillusionment with diplomacy at the time, the true extent of which he seems to have shared only in the aforementioned letters to his wife.

The Whole Country Declared Itself With Me

In his autobiography, Lou Tseng-Tsiang recounted that when he first returned to Shanghai, his home city, after the long wearying months at the Paris Peace Conference, he was greeted by cheering crowds:

Lors de ma rentrée de Chine, vers la fin de 1919, à Shanghai, à la descente du bateau, et dans toutes les gares où mon train devait s’arrêter, de vastes manifestations populaires, ovationnant celui qui avait refusé de signer [...]»⁸⁸

He felt pride in that moment of being acclaimed as a national hero.

In his account however, Lou Tseng-Tsiang omitted the fact that not everyone gathered that day was hailing him as a hero. There were about a thousand protesters who waved banners and called him “traitor” whilst distributing leaflets denouncing him for failing to deliver on the “hopes of citizens” for the recovery of Qingdao and the redress of other violations to Chinese sovereignty.⁸⁹ Nor did Lou recall the aforementioned personal distress he had experienced in Paris before deciding to reject the Treaty of Versailles.

Shortly after returning to China, Lou Tseng-Tsiang resigned as foreign minister, leaving the ministry that he had helped to build up. He cited several reasons for his resignation, namely the persistent enmity of foreigners that he had to confront, the lack of government support for him, the absence on the part of the government of a vision and the lack of a consistent and coordinated action plan for national renewal and reconstitution.⁹⁰

Lou Tseng-Tsiang later wrote that he believed it was pointless for him to remain at the helm of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and continue to be held responsible, by his country and by history, for the whole series of mistakes that had been committed.⁹¹ His resignation was effective from December 1920. Lou also later

⁸⁸ Lou, *Souvenirs et Pensées*, 39.

⁸⁹ Strand, *An Unfinished Republic*, 234-235.

⁹⁰ Lou, *Souvenirs et Pensées*, 70.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

claimed that it was the first manifestation of his secret desire to renounce political life in favor of pursuing other callings⁹²

After Lou Tseng-Tsiang resigned as foreign minister, he did not immediately end his career of public service. Instead, he accepted a position as vice-director of the Famine Relief Bureau, which gave him the chance to come to know the hardships of the common people of China, whose lives were so different from his own.⁹³

In 1922, Lou Tseng-Tsiang left China for Switzerland where he owned a villa in Locarno, as his wife's declining health necessitated a stay in Europe.⁹⁴ While there, he ended up taking one last diplomatic position as Chinese ambassador to Switzerland.⁹⁵ After the passing of his wife, Lou in July 1927 joined the Benedictine abbey of Sint-Andries in Belgium, where he would spend the rest of his life.⁹⁶ Lou made the choice to leave China and eventually the diplomatic world, even though when he first returned from the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, the Chinese people had acclaimed him as a hero for having rejected the Treaty of Versailles, and he had seemed to be at the pinnacle of his public service career.

Conclusion

During the interviews Luo Guang conducted with Lou Tseng-Tsiang as part of his research for a biography of the former Chinese diplomat, the two men discussed Lou's experiences and memories of the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. Lou recalled that:

I was then serving as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Regarding proposals for the Peace Conference, I already had preparations early on. At the time, I wanted to attempt to abolish the Unequal Treaties, whether they agreed to or not was a different matter. Since we had come across this rare opportunity, we must state all that needs to be said, and let foreigners know that China now had people competent in diplomacy and foreign affairs, unlike during the foolish Qing Dynasty that did not know what a country's rights were. When we spoke at Versailles, the other countries' representatives opened their eyes wide, and responded to us that our requests were beyond their jurisdiction.⁹⁷

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid.

94 Ibid., 70-71.

95 Ibid., 89-90.

96 Ibid., 92.

97 Translation of quote: "Wo nashi ren waijiao zongzhang, duiyu hehui de tiyi, yizaoyou zhunbei, wodangshixiang shefa ba bupingdengtiaoyue quxiao, tamen daying budaying nashi lingyishi. Women ji yuzhe zhe nande de jihui, wubi ba gaishuodehua dou shuochu, rangwaiguoren zhidao zhongguo yijing you dongwaijiaoderen, yijing buxiang qingchao naban yuchun, budong guojia de quanli shi shenme. Women zai Fansaier shuohuashi, bieguo daibiao dou zhengyan xiangkan, tamen dashuo women de yaoqiu chaochu tamen de quanxian yishang"

Lou claimed that during the Qing dynasty, Chinese diplomats did not know how to assert that China’s rights and privileges as a sovereign state had to be respected. By 1919, the situation had changed.⁹⁸

Lou Tseng-Tsiang recalled that he had considered the Peace Conference to be a precious opportunity to address the injustices dealt to China through the unequal treaties. Chinese diplomats demonstrated in Paris how much they had learned of the ways of international diplomacy since the time of the Qing Dynasty. As Lou recounted, the other delegates were surprised by the Chinese performance at Versailles, and could only respond that the questions the Chinese delegates hoped to resolve were beyond the jurisdiction of those assembled at Versailles.

The promises of Wilsonian internationalism to create a just international order based on self-determination and equality of nations remained unfulfilled for the Chinese at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. Chinese territories in Shandong inhabited by Chinese people were not returned to China as per the principle of self-determination but rather transferred to Japanese control.

The Peace Conference was nevertheless still a turning point in international and Chinese history. Of all the states participating in the Conference, China was the only one that rejected the Treaty of Versailles.⁹⁹ During the nineteenth century China had signed a series of unequal treaties with foreign powers - such as the one that ceded concessions in Shandong to Germany. In 1919, the Chinese attempted to redress these past injustices. When confronted with a new treaty they perceived as unjust toward China, Chinese diplomats including Lou ultimately chose to reject it.

For Lou Tseng-Tsiang, leading the Chinese delegation to the Peace Conference was his last major act as a diplomat. During the 1920s he served as China’s ambassador to Switzerland before taking up his religious vocation. Some of the younger Chinese diplomats who had served under him in Paris in 1919, for example Wellington Koo, would go on to hold leading positions in the Chinese diplomatic corps such as that of minister of foreign affairs.¹⁰⁰

Despite the disappointment of Paris 1919, Chinese diplomats would continue their quest to redress past injustices through engagement with the mechanisms of international diplomacy. They eventually made incremental progress toward revoking some of the unequal treaties. At the Washington Conference of 1920 –

我那時認外交總長，對於和會的提議，已早有準備，我當時想設法把不平等條約取消，他們答應不答應那是另一事。我們既遇著這難得的機會，務必把該說的話都說出，讓外國人知道中國已經有懂外交的人，已經不向清朝那般愚蠢，不懂國家的權利是什麼。我們在凡賽爾（sic）說話時，別國代表都睜眼相看，他們答說我們的要求超出他們的許可權以上。” From Luo Guang羅光, “Fangwen Lu Zhengxiang shenfu riji (xuwan) 訪問陸徵祥神父日記（續完） (*Diary of Interviews with Father Lu Zhengxiang continuation and end*)” *Zhuanji wenxue (Biographical Literature)* 19, no. 6 (1971): 62.

98 Ibid.

99 Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 193.

100 MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, 343.

1921 for instance, they obtained a statement of principle from the Great Powers to phase out the unequal treaties.¹⁰¹ Lou Tseng-Tsiang, however, no longer played an important part in these efforts, as he had become more concerned with caring for his ailing wife, and then subsequently living his religious vocation as a Benedictine monk.

¹⁰¹ Julia C. Strauss, *Strong Institutions in Weak Polities: State Building in Republican China, 1927-1940* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1998), 153.